

PROFESSOR ROBERT LINEBERRY

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



Professor Robert Lineberry visited Helsinki and opened the Presidential Elections Speaker Series, organized by the US Embassy Helsinki, on August 7th. Professor Lineberry's lecture was held at the American Resource Center ([ARC](#)) and was extremely interesting packed with facts, narratives, and insightful thoughts.

We are happy to be able to offer the lecture, as an audio, to everybody who did not have a chance to come and hear Professor Lineberry on stage. We will continue to dig deeper into elections by continuing the Speaker Series in the near future.

[Click here](#) or the microphone to listen.



Every four years the Americans consider the up-coming elections to be historical. And in some way, every election is historical. In this election Hillary Clinton was a first major female candidate for major party nomination. Barack Obama is a first African American candidate for presidency and in John McCain there is a possibility for him to become the oldest nominated president. But in many ways the elections have more in common year after year than we think.

In 2000, when Al Gore seemed to be getting more votes, many were surprised to see George W. Bush inaugurated to presidency. This is a consequence of a very complicated system of Electoral College. The Electoral College is a body of 538 elected representatives that formally elect the President and Vice President. In order for one candidate to get elected a simple majority (at least 270 electoral votes) is needed.

What this peculiar institution, the Electoral College, means, is that what the candidates have to do is concentrate their efforts to a very small number of states, so called swing states or key states. The key states are not necessarily the ones that are the biggest, but the ones that are competitive; the ones that have in the near history voted both parties, or don't have a strong track record on supporting either of the parties; the states that can swing 49-51 or 48-52, depending on each campaign and candidate. These are the states that will again this November become the decisive battlegrounds, and will decide the candidate who gets elected to the White House.

Every election year, a small group of political scientists get together at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association ([APSA](#)) and predict the result of the elections. The data they dig into consist of demographics, historical patterns, and other statistically measured information, but they resist analyzing the candidates and campaigns. And as Professor Lineberry noted, "by God, every four years, they are going to come *that* close to the actual percentage the actual winning candidate enjoys." But with the Electoral College in action the statistics do not make the winner – the elections are decided on the streets, inside the voting booths, and by the overall opinion of the American people.

These were just few of topics that were covered by Professor Lineberry. You can learn more about these and much, much, more from Professor Lineberry's full lecture, which you can listen from [here](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Electoral College](#)

[Guide to the 2008 Election](#)

[Electoral College and Campaigns](#)

[America.gov / F.A.Q.](#)

[Battleground States](#)

[NY Times : Key States](#)

[Focus on Swing States](#)

[Campaign Trail / Blog](#)

[Party Conventions](#)

[Democratic Convention](#)

[Republican Convention](#)

[America.gov / F.A.Q.](#)

[Candidates](#)

[Meet the Candidates](#)

[Barack Obama](#)

[John McCain](#)